

The role of narrative in the transmission and contextualization of traditional ecological knowledge in Mortlockese

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Presentation Goals

- interdisciplinary inspiration
- conceptual tools
- Mortlockese examples of TEK in discourse
- implications for fieldwork, collaboration, and transmission



‘Interdisciplinary’

- “Interdisciplinary work, so much discussed these days, is not about confronting already constituted disciplines (none of which, in fact, is willing to let itself go). To do something interdisciplinary it’s not enough to choose a “subject” (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences.

Interdisciplinarity consists in creating a new object that belongs to no one” (Ronald Barthes, quoted in Clifford 1986:1).

Hawai'i-Fiji Workshop and Training on Social-Ecological Resiliency to Climate Change

- UHM-USP collaboration (Sept. 2012)
- Representation from: oceanography, ethnobotany, coral reef ecology, archaeology, linguistics, sociology, fishery management, community-based research
- **How can TEK help strengthen social-ecological resiliency of Pacific Island communities to climate change?**

Presentation Questions

- What role does narrative play in the transmission and contextualization of TEK?
- What implications does this have on documentation, collaboration with ethnobiologists, and language learning?

Our Charges As Researchers

- **language documentation:** develop a “corpus of recordings of observable linguistic behavior and metalinguistic knowledge” (Himmelman 2006:10)
- **biocultural studies:** engage in “transdisciplinary research concerned with investigating the links between the world’s linguistic, cultural, and biological diversity as manifestations of the diversity of life (Maffi 2005:599)

Traditional Ecological Knowledge

- “a cumulative [and dynamic] body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and their environment” (Berkes 2008:8)

Traditional Ecological Knowledge

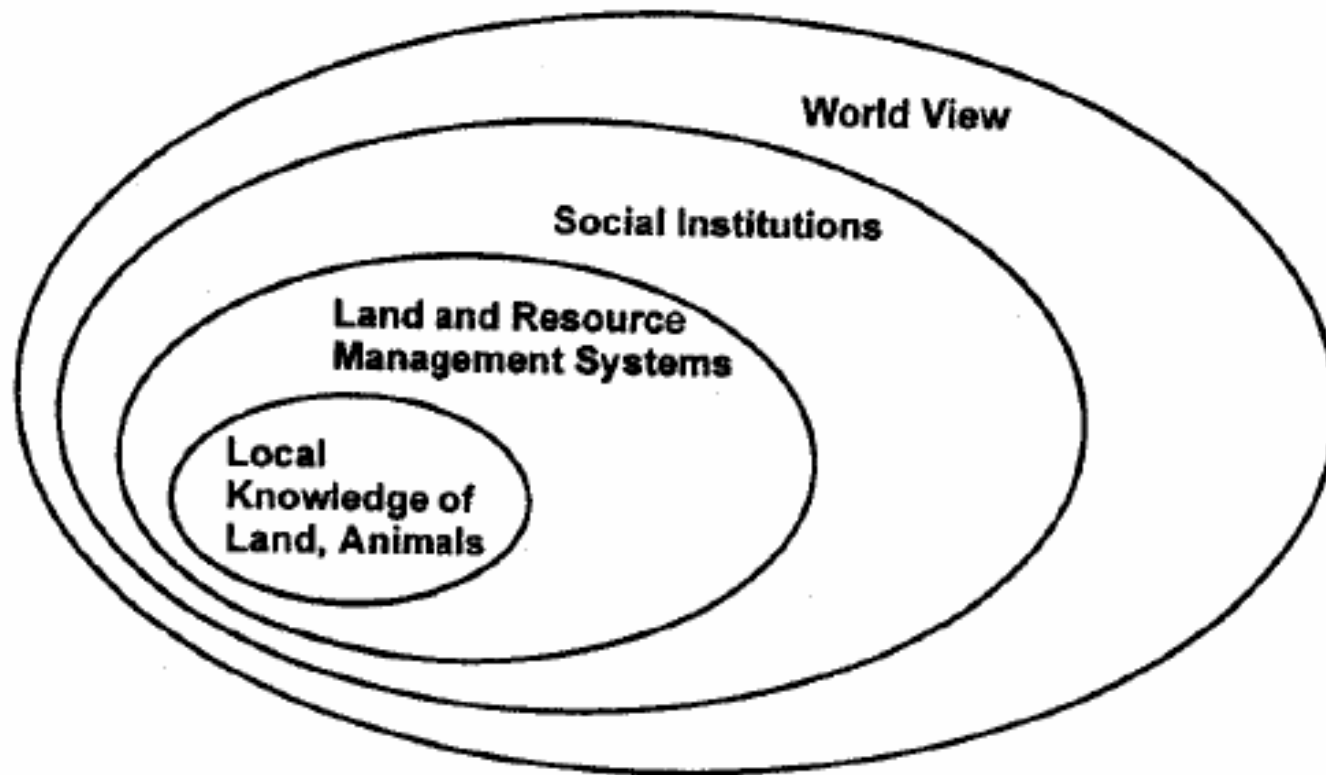


Figure 1.1 Levels of analysis in traditional knowledge and management systems.

(Berkes 2008:n.p.)

Kúús, Máái, mé Manaman

- May 2012: observation of the tandem growth of *kúús* ‘octopus’ and *máái* ‘breadfruit’ in the cultural context of *manaman* ‘spiritual/supernatural power’



Nganei, manamanen sokkon kké, áá?
 Manaman.
 Manaman pwe, nganei máái?
 E sóótou, ie faffaún.
 Kúús núúsha sokkon faffaún ie.
 Kúús, aa ioor leaset.
 Raá féfféúshaala máái,
 pwal féfféúshaala kúús.
 Aa núshaala.
 Iaa, “Pwata e féérátá táái...
 eké fééritá sokkon ie?”
 Mé manaman, áá?
 Féérian eie mé lááng,
 féerei sokkon kké.
 Pwai mwaar.

Look, the spiritual power of things like this, huh?
 It has spiritual power.
 It has spiritual power because, look at the breadfruit?
 It falls down, and it's this size.
 There are plenty of octopus of this size.
 Octopus, there are in the ocean.
 The breadfruit would get bigger,
 the octopus, too, would get bigger.
 They increase in number.
 I would say, “Why would this happen..
 why did something like this happen?”
 It's from the spiritual power, huh?
 This is something created by the heavens,
 to make something like this.
 I, too, am amazed.

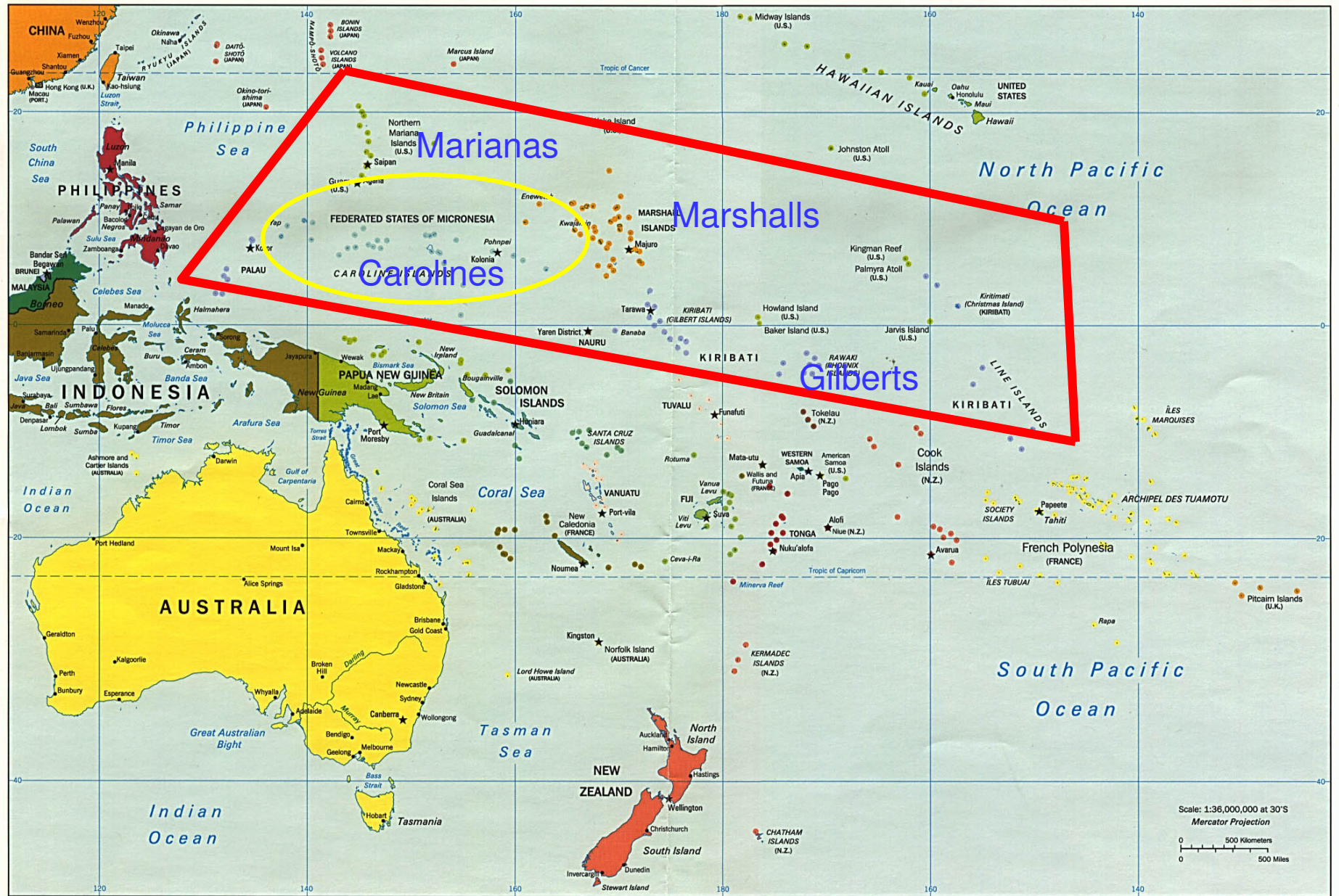
Narrative

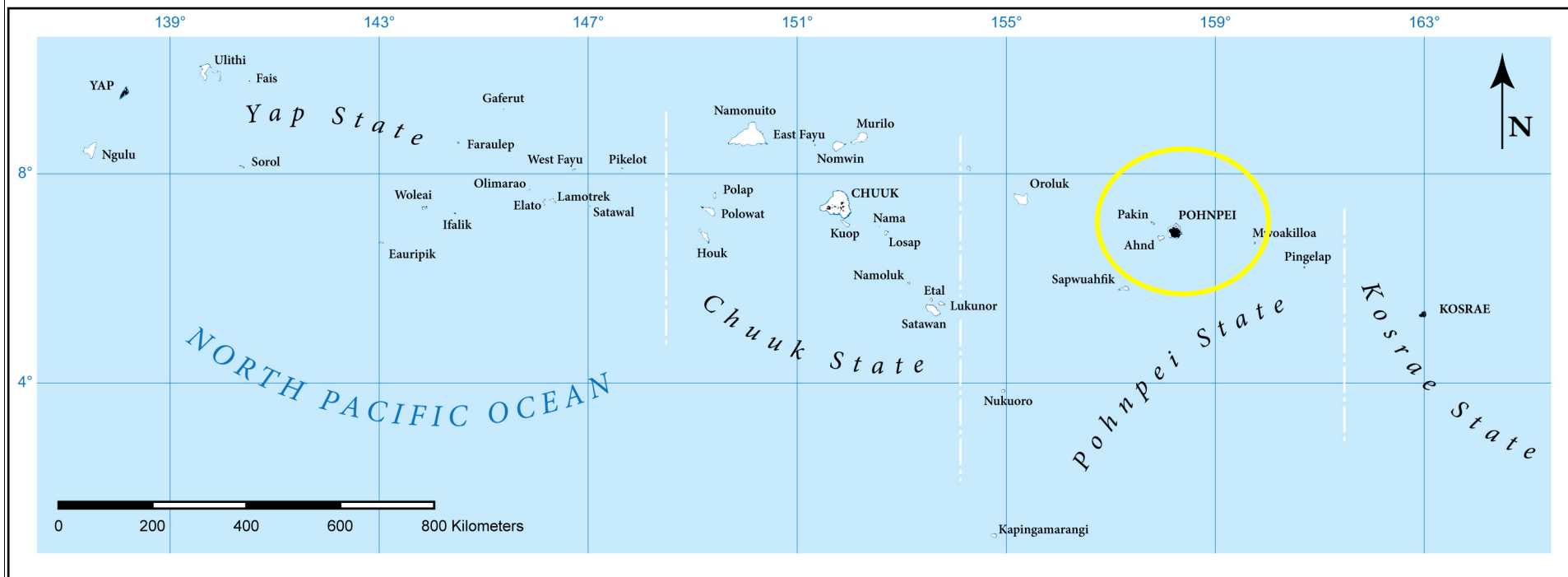
- “one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred (Labov 1972:218)
 - anecdote** — a minimal narrative (Labov 1972:218) of personal experience that often contains evaluative elements and allows interlocutors to engage in critical reflection (Doecke et al. 2000)

Socialization

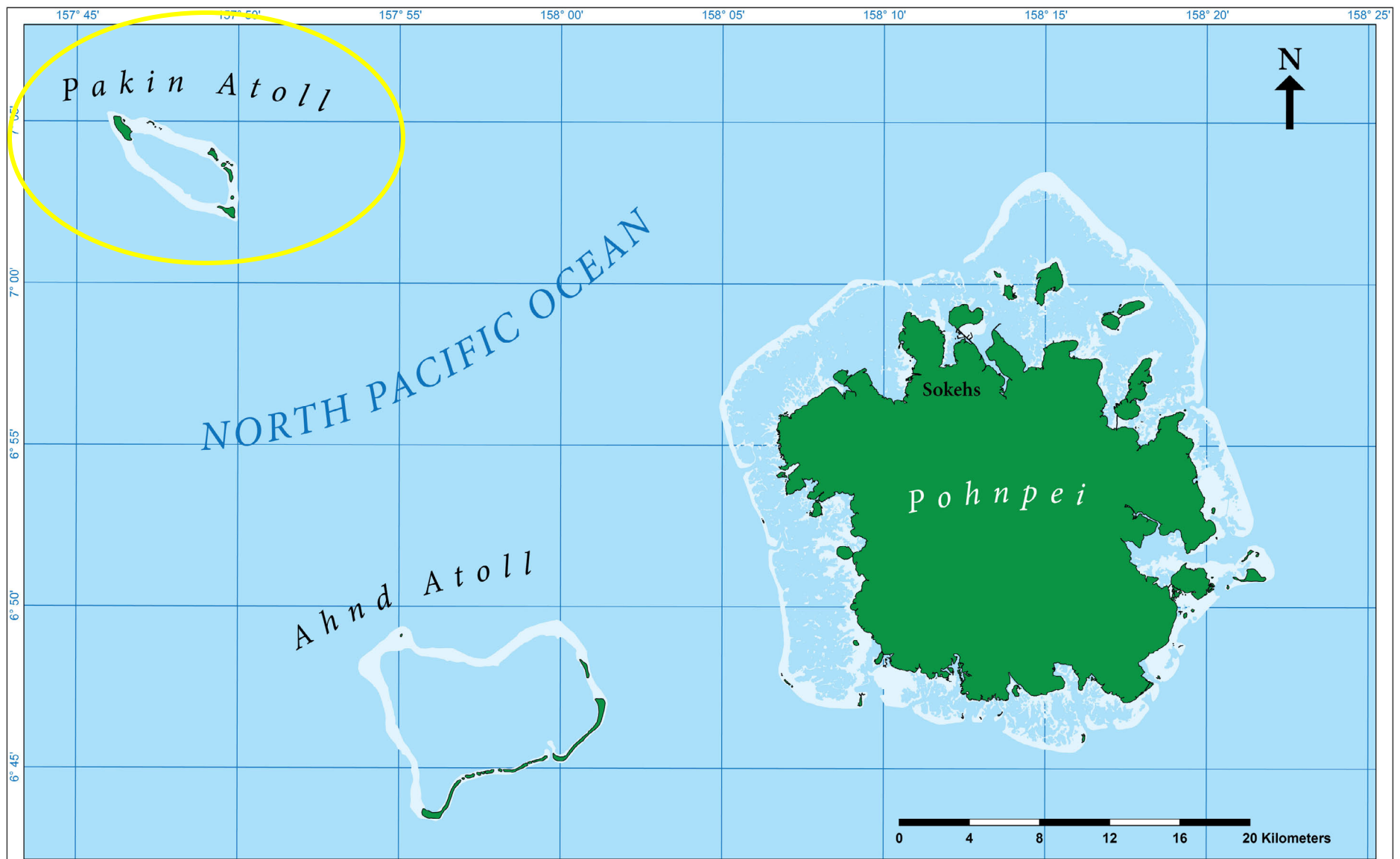
- “the process of becoming a competent member of a society is realized to a large extent through language, by acquiring knowledge of its functions, social distribution, and interpretations in and across socially defined situations, i.e., through exchanges of language in particular social situations” (Ochs & Schieffelin 2009:297)

Oceania





(map courtesy of Dr. Danko Taboroši)



(map courtesy of Dr. Danko Taboroši)



(Google Maps)



(Google Maps)

Kapsen Mwoshulók

- Mortlockese – 7,000 speakers in Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), several thousand more in Guam, HI, CA
- one of 17 languages spoken in FSM
- originally spoken in Mortlock Islands to the southeast of Chuuk Lagoon
- diasporic communities throughout FSM, including Pohnpei

Pakin Atoll

- population of ~100
- Mortlockese L1, Pohnpeian L2
- Peace Corps Volunteer (2006-2009)
- data from participant observation, interviews, elicitation sessions, transect walks (2009-present)

Liakak, Urupap, mé Kiliing

- May 2009: Sounirek Pakin (high chief of Pakin) is explaining the cultural significance of *liakak* ‘whimbrel’, *urupap* ‘plover’, and *kiliing* ‘turnstone’
- was only asked to provide local names, but offered much more information than expected...

Esies (Truk)
Machich (Yap)

Kiliing (*Arenaria interpres*)



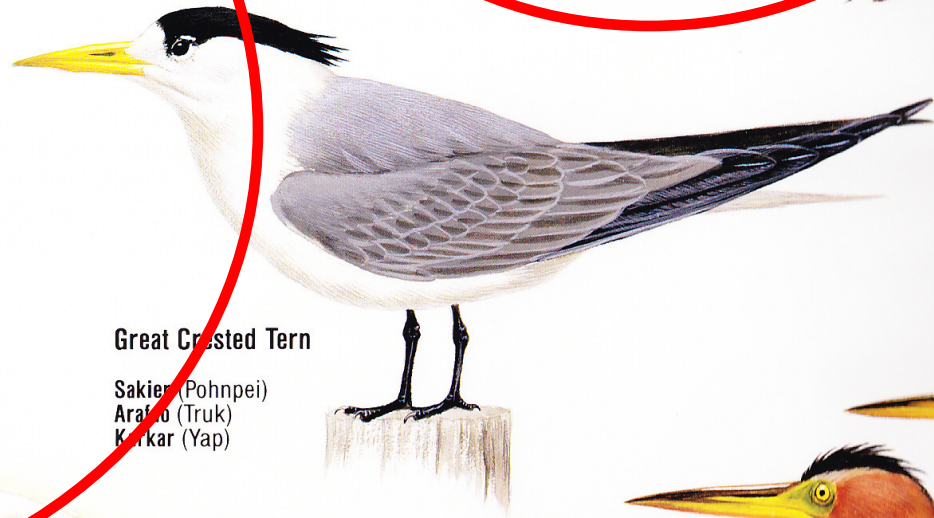
Whimbrel

Katkat (Kosrae)
Kulu (Pohnpei)
Niakak (Truk)
Gogow (Yap)



Ruddy Turnstone

Kulul (Kosrae)
Kulu (Pohnpei)
Inin (Truk)
Lugnu Shour (Yap)



Great Crested Tern

Sakien (Pohnpei)
Arafo (Truk)
Karkar (Yap)

Liakak (*Numenius phaeopus*)

white phase

adult

Kakowe (Kosrae)
Liparok (Pohnpei)
Nifaro (Truk)
Gagaiow (Yap)

Black-naped Tern

Karkar (Pohnpei)
Lipowale Arar (Truk)
Rothal (Yap)

Urupap (*Pluvialis fulva*)

Ruddy Turnstone

Kulul (Kosrae)
Kulu (Pohnpei)
Inin (Truk)
Lugnu Shour (Yap)

Lesser Golden-Plover

Kulul (Kosrae)
Kulu (Pohnpei)
Kuling (Truk)
K'oleng (Yap)

Wandering Tattler

Kulul (Kosrae)
Kulu (Pohnpei)
Inin (Truk)
K'oleng (Yap)

White-browed Ra

Tutuwi (Pohnpei)
Niwowo (Truk)
Bal (Yap)

Contextualization Cue

- “any feature of linguist form that contributes to the signaling of contextual presuppositions”, which emerge as “constellations of surface features of message form...the means by which speakers signal and listeners interpret what the activity is, how semantic content is to be understood and *how* each sentence relates to what precedes or follows” (Gumperz 1982:131).

Liakak, Urupap, mé Kiliing

- *Era, loomw, áá?*
 - ‘They would say, a long time ago, do you follow?’
 - signal for start of narrative
- *Satawan...Satawan má.*
 - ‘In a place called “Satawan”...Satawan, indeed.’
 - discourse marker *má* is multifaceted: emphasis, epistemological stance, authority

Liakak, Urupap, mé Kiliing

- my initial interest was only in lexical documentation
- the narrative and song were epiphenomenal to me (at the time)
- later analysis of previous recordings show how the narrative and song are performances which embed this TEK in Mortlockese culture

Woon

- May 2012: Diego Maipi and Nicklaus Marco looked through images of marine life as elicitation tool
- the very first image elicited a spontaneous narrative between interlocutors



<http://topnews.net.nz/images/Rare-Turtle.jpg>

Woon

- co-constructed description of the turtle immediately followed by narrative
- turtles not usually found swimming *limmat* 'near-shore shallow water'
- singularity of turtle outside of normal range must be shared between community members

Neen

- May 2012: Annas Maipi looked through brochure of Pohnpeian plants, identified which grow on Pakin, local Mortlockese names and cultural uses (distinct from Pohnpeian)



Ngé, waan kewe, ekkewe mi, ia itan we?
Ekkewe mi mwóshóshshór?

(Mi mwóshóshshór?)

(Aumi kai mwongo?)

Ngééú, epwilek raa óshóósh.

(E kai óshóósh? Are...)

Ngééú!

Leekisii, shóóp wút we eké mwéúteiái,
e kan oshóósh.

Ai kai la malamal,

kare aa wérei faún neen we aa púngútou,
aa osoheei.

Ipé aiek, “Pwata uaa oosheei?”

“Sááfei.”

E kai úró “sááfei.”

(Mm.)

Ngé i ké úró, “Sáfian meet?”

Isé kilei are e kai ropeiái.

“Upé oshóósh ina upwé– upwe...”

But, the fruits, the ones that are, what’s it called?

The ones that are soft?

(That are soft?)

(Do you eat them cooked?)

Yes, some people eat them raw.

(One would eat them raw? Or...)

Yes!

When I was little, the woman who adopted me,
she would eat them raw.

We would go out to weed the gardens,
if she sees a noni fruit that fell down,
she ate it.

I would ask, “Why do you eat it?”

“Medicine.”

She would say “medicine.”

(Yeah.)

But then I would say, “Medicine for what?”

I don’t know if she was lying to me.

“You’ll eat it and then you will– you will...”

Meeta reen—
 Utáán ie ngngawii.
 Isé ian kilei mé reen kapsen Mwoshulók reen—
 Re Fónpei re kai úró ‘pwerisek’.
 ‘Pwerisek’?
 (Meet— meet sipé úró?)
 (Esapw ne ‘shófóónek’?)
 Ina!
 (Oh.)
 Áái lúkú ina, shófóóneken angaang.
 (Ee.)
 Ee.
 Oo, uaa far pwal angaash.
 (Aapw, usun iaa shemenei, eeu fansóun)
 Ngééú.
 (mé loomw, eman eké—)
 (iké aiekaneí eman,)
 (“Meeta weewen ‘pwerisek’?”)
 (Usun i— are iaa far aiekaneí Jonathan are,)
 Ee.
 (eman lein.)

What is it in—
 Really this is my problem.
 I don’t know what it is in Mortlockese for—
 Pohnpeians say ‘pwerisek’.
 ‘Pwerisek’?
 (What— what will we say?)
 (Isn’t it ‘shófóónek’?)
 That’s it!
 (Oh.)
 I believe that’s it, hard-working.
 (Right.)
 Right.
 Oh, you’re much more skilled than me.
 (No, it’s as if I remebered, one time)
 Yes.
 (before, someone had—)
 (I asked someone,)
 (“What does ‘pwerisek’ mean?”)
 (It’s as if I— or I had asked Jonathan I think or,)
 Right.
 (someone among them.)

Ina, upwe shófóónek.
 (Shófóónek, e?)
 Mm.
 (Ashooshoo reen óómw angaang.)
 Ashoosho reen áái angaang.
 Umwi kilei pwe utáán shóóp wút we
 eman shóóp wút utáán ashoosho le angaang.
 Kan malamal leepwel,
 nge iké úra, “Ngé kare iké mwongo ipé pwer—”
 “Ngéú! Ina upé mwongo, iwe,”
 Ipé kú shak, iaa... isé mwmwón.
 (Ia nann— pwe mé reei mi ekis—)
 Emi,
 Pwoon, mi ioor pwoon,
 (Ee.)
 emi ekis mwiik.
 (Mwiik?)
 Usun emi... mi meet ipé aweewe nganei, emi—
 iangipwésh.
 Usun emi mwiik.
 (Mm mm.)
 Shéén mwongomw na epé máfei mwikken.

That’s it, you will be hard-working.
 (Hard-working, huh?)
 Mm.
 (Dutiful towards your work.)
 Dutiful towards my work.
 You know that really that woman
 was a woman who was really dutiful towards work.
 She would weed the taro patch,
 and I would ask, “But if I eat it I will become—”
 “Yes! Go ahead you’ll eat it, and then,”
 I would just bite it, then I thought... I don’t like it.
 (What the taste— because to me it it’s a little—)
 It is,
 The smell, it has a smell,
 (Right.)
 it’s a little spicy.
 (Spicy?)
 It’s as if it is... how shall I explain it, it is—
 windy-hot.
 It’s as if it is spicy.
 (Right right.)
 Your tongue will taste the spiciness.

Neen

- the first narrative after 20 minutes into the session, preceded primarily by description and procedures
- reaction to my disbelief by offering narrative as 'supporting evidence' that *neen* is edible raw due to cultural value

Kiliing

- May 2010: Andolin Bernard shares traditional folktale about a young boy and *kiliing* during requested story session
- other young children listening during session

Kiliing

- particular folktale is well-known by children
- a request for a narrative produced TEK
- (recall Sounirek Pakin's account: a request for TEK produced narrative)

Implications for Fieldwork

- researchers should attune to narrative while shaping research projects and conducting fieldwork
 - learn how to become an engaged listener, to be ratified by other interlocutors
 - build rapport, gain further insights
 - “When you asked us about birds and plants, we saw that you knew a lot about them, and that you could understand what we told you. When you began asking us about rocks, it was obvious you didn’t know anything about them. Why should we waste our time telling you something you couldn’t possible understand?” (Diamond 1991:85)

Implications for Fieldwork

- research questions from various fields allow us to choose topics and contexts that explore TEK:
 - Interactional Sociolinguistics – How does stance-taking allow speakers to assert authority of their stewardship of TEK?

Implications for Fieldwork

- awareness of context:
 - interview sessions are unique contexts, but tend to decontextualize TEK from their cultural-ecological embeddedness
 - observe the interaction of fishermen, gardeners, practitioners, etc. to see how TEK emerges in interactional discourse
 - observe not only how one generation teaches another, but how members in cohorts teach each other

Implications for Collaboration

- similar research question: “What kinds of worldviews and social practices embed propositional and procedural TEK?”
- project design from the outset:
 - ethnography of a speech community and their environment
 - social-ecological resilience (e.g., How can TEK enhance resilience to climate change?)

Implications for Transmission

- How can documentations of TEK enhance the intergenerational transmission (Fishman 1991) of this knowledge (and language used to encode knowledge)?
- On Pakin, how does a young child learn bird names?
 - children are not given lists of local and scientific names to memorize
 - children are socialized through language and activity about the value of birds in their world

Implications for Transmission

- work with local teachers to develop multi-modal curricula (e.g., Western science alongside indigenous/local systems)
- build upon multilingual language policies in school systems
- storytelling is a pedagogical tool (Alterio 2002, Reissner 2004, inter alia)

Kilissou Shaapwúr
Maraming Salamat
(Thank You)



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